



MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

PART I. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

1. Project Title: Ohuuh' niikébináac/O'a'tabi (Fort Belknap Community) Shooting Range Proposed Development

2. Type of Proposed Action:

The Fort Belknap Indian Community proposes to develop a handicap-accessible shooting range. Phase 1 will involve construction of the shooting range infrastructure, including:

- Constructing a 350'X 25'X 10' berm,
- Installing perimeter fencing for the entire range and constructing an access road and entrance
- Installing shooting benches

3. Location Affected by Proposed Action:

The Ohuuh' niikébináac/O'a'tabi Shooting Range is located on approximately 27 acres of Fort Belknap Tribal land, 8 miles southeast of Fort Belknap Agency, Montana, along State Highway 66, SE1/4 Section 34 and SW1/4 Section 35, T31N, R23E.

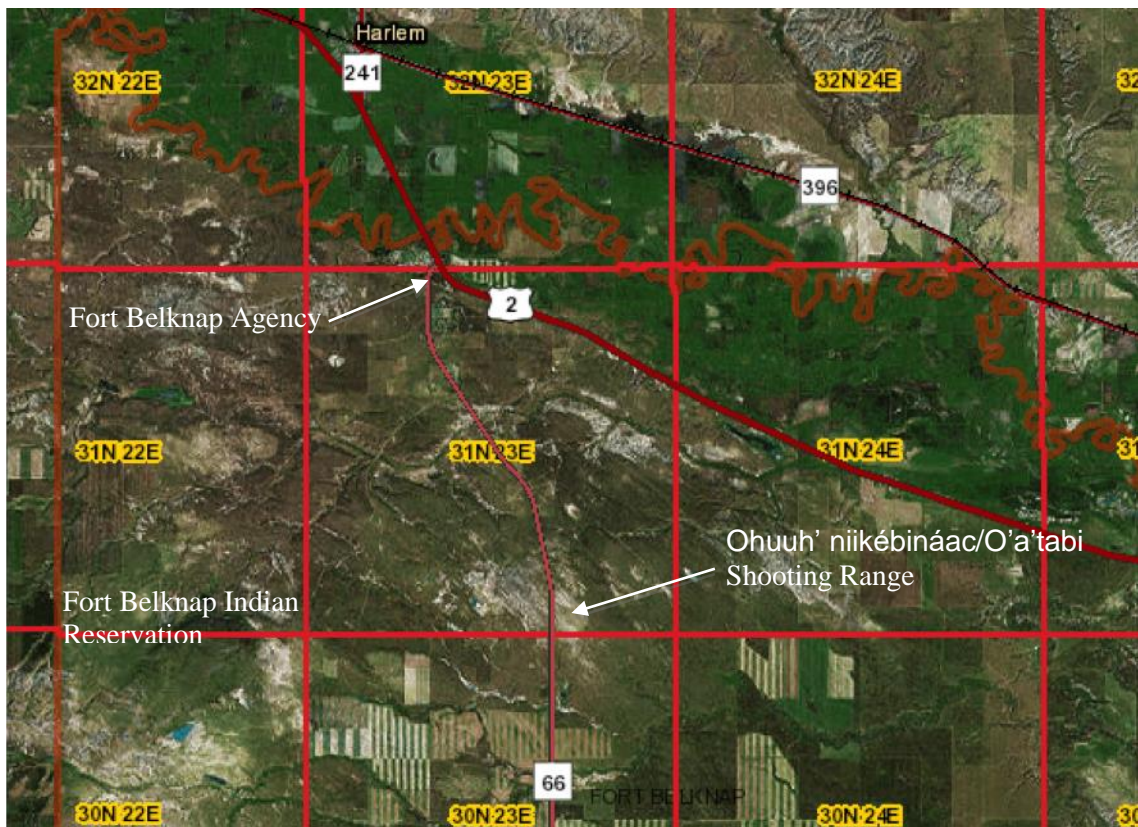


Figure 1. Proposed Ohuuh' niikébináac/O'a'utabi Shooting Range, Fort Belknap Agency, Montana.

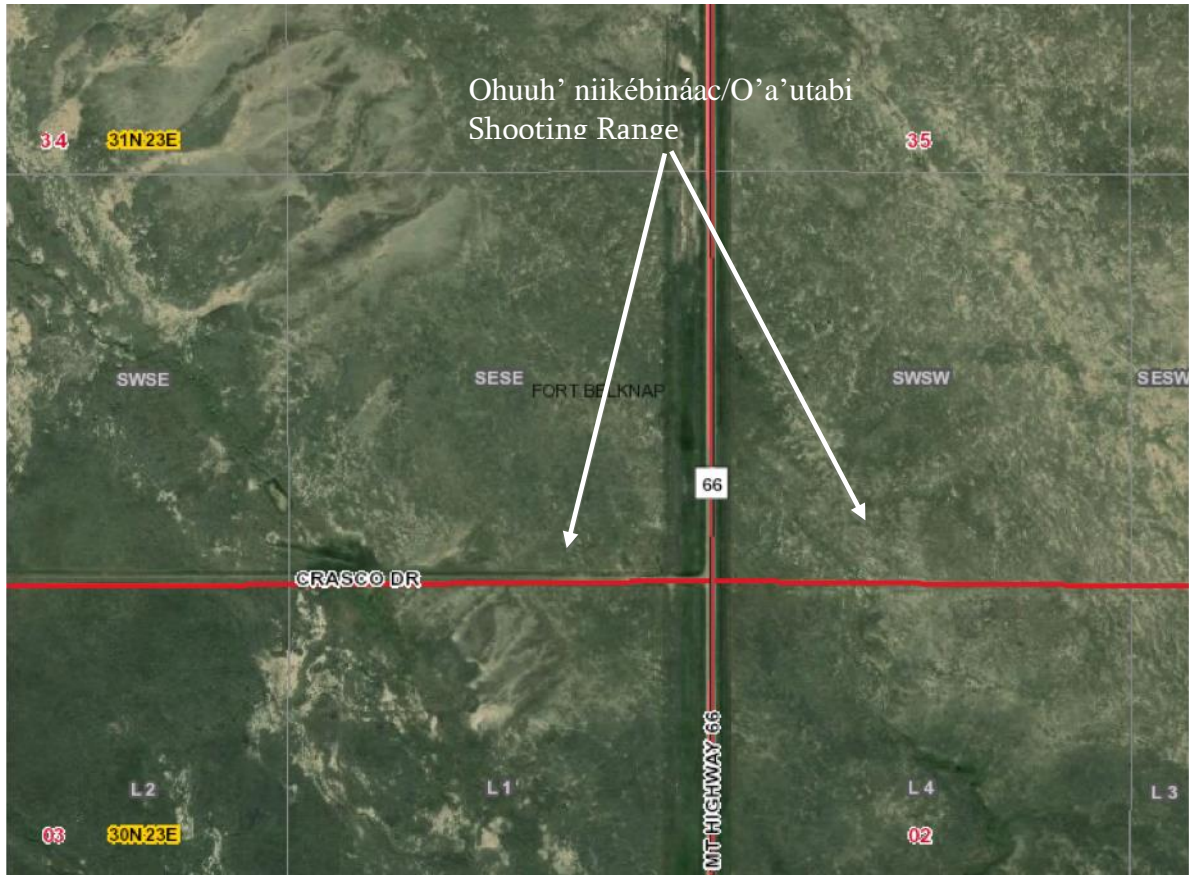


Figure 2. General Location of Ohuuh' niikébináac/O'a'utabi Shooting Range

4. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action: MCA 87-1-276 through 87-1-279 (Legislative established policies and procedures for the establishment and improvement of shooting ranges) and MCA 87-2-105 (Departmental authority to expend funds to provide training in the safe handling and use of firearms and safe hunting practices). The Montana Legislature has authorized funding for the establishment of a Shooting Range Development Program providing financial assistance for the development of shooting ranges. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) has responsibility for the administration of the program, including the necessary guidelines and procedures governing applications for funding assistance under the program.

To be eligible for grant assistance, a private shooting club or a private organization:

- (a)(i) Shall accept in its membership any person who holds or is eligible to hold a Montana hunting license and who pays club or organization membership fees;*
- (ii) May not limit the number of members;*
- (iii) May charge a membership fee not greater than the per-member share of the club's or organization's reasonable cost of provision of services, including establishment, improvement, and maintenance of shooting facilities and other membership services; and*
- (iv) Shall offer members occasional guest privileges at no cost to the member or invited guest and shall make a reasonable effort to hold a public sight-in day each September, when the general public may use the shooting range for a day-use fee or at no cost; or*
- (b) Shall admit the general public for a reasonable day-use fee.*

5. Need for the Action(s):

The Fort Belknap Indian Reservation lacks any type of formal shooting range for area residents. Even though members of the community enjoy all types of outdoor recreational activities including hunting and fishing, there is no place for the community to develop shooting skills. Vandals use signs throughout the reservation as targets and hunters often trespass on private land to sight in their rifles. Currently, only a rough, self-made target range exists. All segments of the community, including law enforcement, hunter education students, hunters and recreational shooters, would benefit from a formal, outdoor shooting range. The proposed project would also provide additional shooting opportunities for visitors and handicapped shooters.

6. Objectives for the Action(s):

The proposed shooting range would give the shooting community, instructors, children, handicapped shooters, and law enforcement a safe and convenient facility for education, practical application, shooting practice, training, recreational shooting, tournaments, and other competitions.

7. Project Size: estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected:

The proposed project will cover up to 27 acres of the 320-acre tribal tract.

8. Affected Environment (A brief description of the affected area of the proposed project):

The 27-acre Ohuuh' niikébináac/O'a'tabi Shooting Range will be located on land owned by the Fort Belknap Indian Community. The land is not within or adjacent to any floodplain. There are no permanent surface waters or wetlands on the property and waterways on the property comprise only intermittent seasonal runoff. The terrain consists of flat to rolling hills and is dry, rocky, and semi-arid. All shooting will occur south of the nearest water.

9. Description of Project:

Ohuuh' niikébináac/O'a'tabi Shooting Range will be a specialized facility designed for firearms qualifications, training, and practice. The first phase of this project involve construction of the infrastructure of the shooting range, including construction of an access road and entrance, a 350 x 2 5x10 berm, five handicap shooting benches, elevated decking to house the shooting benches, perimeter fencing, gates, and benches. Subsequent work will expand into additional phases, including the construction of various shooting

ranges, facilities, a hunter education/headquarters building, outdoor education pavilion, covered firing line, improvements to roads and building a parking area.

▪ Design/Engineering/Architect	\$ 5,000
▪ Materials	\$153,000
▪ Labor	\$ 10,000
▪ Misc Expenses	<u>\$ 12,000</u>
▪ Total Budget for the Proposed Project	\$ 180,000
▪ Total Labor-in-Kind	\$ 50,400
▪ Total FWP Funding Requested	\$ 90,000

10. List any Other Local, State, or Federal Agency that has Overlapping or Additional Jurisdiction:

None

Permits, Licenses and/or Authorizations:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
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N/A

Funding:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
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Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$90,000
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11. Affiliations, Cooperating Agencies, User Groups and/or Supporting Groups:

The proposed Ohuuh' niikébináac/O'a'utabi Shooting Range will be located on a 27-acre parcel that is part of 320 acres of tribal land owned by the Fort Belknap Indian Community. The Ohuuh' niikébináac/O'a'utabi Shooting Range will be a tribal-owned facility, operated by the Fort Belknap Fish and Wildlife Department. As a public shooting range, the facilities will be open free of charge to all Montana residents. It is anticipated that the Ohuuh' niikébináac/O'a'utabi Shooting Range will be used by a number of groups, such as 4H Shooting Sports, Hunter Safety and Education, Blaine County Sheriff Department, Fort Belknap Law and Order Department, and various shooting clubs.

12. History of the Planning and Scoping Process, and Any Public Involvement:

Because the proposed Ohuuh' niikébináac/O'a'utabi Shooting Range will be a public range owned by the Fort Belknap Indian Community, there has been public involvement in the planning process. Proposed range proposals have been discussed with the public and the associated project vendors and contractors.

13. List of Agencies Consulted/Contacted During Preparation of the EA:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

14. Names, Address, and Phone Number of Project Sponsor:

Connie Filesteel, 465 Tribal Way, Harlem, MT 59526. (406) 344-2209.

15. Other Pertinent Information:

The Ohuuh' niikébináac/O'a'utabi Shooting Range will be a tribal-owned facility, managed by the Fort Belknap Fish and Wildlife Department. The range will be located eight miles southeast of Fort Belknap Agency, Montana and will serve Fort Belknap Agency and Harlem as well as smaller communities within easy driving distance of the range. The closest range that provides similar shooting opportunities is a private range located in Harlem, Montana approximately 10 miles from the proposed Ohuuh' niikébináac/O'a'utabi Shooting Range. The range will initially offer opportunities for several shooting sports, including long-range rifle, rifle, shotgun, and pistol.

Shooting range applications require the participating governing body to approve by resolution its submission

of applications for shooting range-funding assistance. Resolution Date: February 1, 2019.

PART II. IDENTIFICATION OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES

Alternative A, the Proposed Alternative, and Alternative B, the No Action Alternative, were considered.

- **Alternative A (Proposed Alternative)** is as described in Part I, paragraph 9 (Description of Project): to develop a formal shooting range at Fort Belknap Agency, Montana. There are beneficial consequences to acceptance of the **Proposed Alternative**.
- **Alternative B (No Action Alternative)** Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Shooting Range Development Grant money would be denied and the area will remain as an undeveloped Tribal land without the proposed improvements. The No Action alternative would have no significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences. The public would continue to use undeveloped areas for target practice. Land use would remain the same.

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the No Action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented: Only the proposed alternative and the No Action alternative were considered. There were no other alternatives that were deemed reasonably available, nor prudent. Neither the proposed alternative nor the No Action alternative would have significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

Describe any Alternatives considered and eliminated from Detailed Study:

None. Only the proposed alternative and the No Action alternative were considered. There was no other alternative that was deemed reasonably available, or prudent. Neither the **Proposed Alternative** nor the **No Action Alternative** would have significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

List and explain proposed mitigating measures (stipulations):

None

PART III. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Abbreviated Checklist – The degree and intensity determines extent of Environmental Review. An abbreviated checklist may be used for those projects that are not complex, controversial, or are not in environmentally sensitive areas.

Table 1. Potential impact on physical environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		
2. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats				X		2
3. Introduction of new species into an area				X		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality				X		
5. Water quality, quantity & distribution (surface or groundwater)				X		5
6. Existing water right or reservation				X		
7. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture				X		
8. Air quality or objectionable odors				X		8
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		9
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
11. Aesthetics				X		

2. & 5. There are no delineated wetlands and no natural water sources on the site proposed for development. No critical wildlife habitat would be affected. Any resident or transient wildlife may leave the immediate area during construction activities.

8. Minor and temporary dust and vehicle emissions would be created during construction of

the berm. However, the construction time is short and human effects will be limited due to the sparse population in the surrounding area.

9. This project is located on tribal land held in trust by the Federal government for the Fort Belknap Indian Community. The Fort Belknap Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) would be contacted before construction or land disturbance activities begin. If cultural resources are found, construction would cease until THPO clearance is obtained.

Table 2. Potential impacts on human environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Social structures and cultural diversity				X		
2. Changes in existing public benefits provided by wildlife populations and/or habitat				X		
3. Local and state tax base and tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural production				X		
5. Human health				X		5
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				X		
7. Access to & quality of recreational activities				X		7
8. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals (ordinances)				X		

9. Distribution & density of population and housing				X		
10. Demands for government services				X		
11. Industrial and/or commercial activity				X		

5. The proposed installation of perimeter fencing, gates, shooting benches, informational and regulatory signs, and construction of a berm would improve the safety for the public and members using the facility.

7. The proposed development of the Ohuuh’ niikébináac/O’a’utabi Shooting Range will improve the quality of the shooting sports within the community.

PART IV. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

All of the pertinent or potential impacts of the project have been reviewed, discussed, and analyzed. None of the project activities reviewed were complex, controversial, or located in an environmentally sensitive area.

There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative.

The Fort Belknap Indian Community’s Proposed Alternative, to develop a safe, regulated shooting range, is supported by its members and the public. Therefore, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks should approve the Proposed Alternative (A) for the improvements as outlined in Part I, Paragraph 9.

PART V. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur? No

Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant? Individually, the proposed actions have minor impacts. However, it was determined that there are no significant or potentially significant cumulatively impacts. Cumulative impacts have been assessed considering any incremental impact of the proposed action when they are combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, and no significant impacts or substantially controversial issues were found. There are no extreme hazards created with this project and there are no conflicts with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan.

Recommendation and justification concerning preparation of EIS:

There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative; therefore, an EIS is not required.

PART VI. EA CONCLUSION SECTION

Individuals or groups contributing to, or commenting on, this EA:

- Connie Filesteel, 465 Tribal Way, Harlem, MT 59526. (406) 344-2209.
- MT Fish Wildlife and Parks

EA prepared by:

Andrea Darling
Darling Natural Resource Consulting
Montana City, MT 59634

Date Completed:

April 4, 2019

Describe public involvement, if any:

This draft EA will be advertised on FWP's web site and through a legal ad in the ***Blaine County Journal, Chinook, MT*** announcing a public comment period. A press release will also announce the project and comment period.